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Pakistan

Poultry and Products

Pakistan Confirms H5N1 in Mansehra and Abbottabad

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Report Highlights:

On February 15 and 18, Pakistan confirmed two new H5N1 outbreaks affecting about 10,000 birds on commercial poultry farms in Mansehra and Abbottabad, located about 60 miles north of Islamabad. So far, 101,000 birds have succumbed or been culled as a result of eight H5N1 outbreaks during the 2007/08 migratory bird season.

Includes PSD Changes: No
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Annual Report
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Pakistan Confirms H5N1 in Mansehra and Abbottabad

On February 15 and 18, Pakistan's National Reference Laboratory for Avian Influenza (NRLAI) confirmed the presence of the H5N1 virus in two commercial poultry farms at Mansehra and Abbottabad, located about 100 kilometers (62 miles) north of Islamabad. The confirmed cases in Mansehra occurred at a five-week old broiler operation. The Abbottabad outbreak was on a seven-week old breeder farm. The collective flock size on the two farms was about 10,000 birds; 2,000 died before confirmation and the rest were culled. The Government of Pakistan (GOP) has taken standard quarantine measures and the affected area has been sealed.

More Outbreaks Expected

These outbreaks are the seventh and eighth confirmed H5N1 cases in Pakistan during the 2007/08 migratory bird season, with more than 100,000 birds dead or culled so far. The last reported outbreak in Pakistan was in Karachi on February 7. The last reported outbreak in Abbottabad was on November 20 at a breeder farm. More outbreaks are expected given the pattern of last year's outbreaks.

Unregulated Poultry Farms: A Potential Threat

The Ministry of Food Agriculture and Livestock (MINFAL) is urging all poultry farmers to increase disease surveillance and immediately report all incidences of high poultry mortality. The GOP is also planning to regulate the domestic poultry industry which at present is highly unregulated. As most poultry farms are built in clusters near cities, the human population is vulnerable to the spread of any infectious poultry disease, including avian influenza. The lack of biosafety measures coupled with the prevalence of wet markets are a perpetual threat. More cases of H5N1 are expected as the season progresses.

Poultry Industry Suffers Heavy Losses

According to the President of the Pakistan Poultry Association Mr. Abdul Basit, the H5N1 outbreaks had "badly hit" the industry which has suffered "massive losses" in February alone. Pakistan's poultry industry employs 1.5 million workers in over 28,000 commercial farms, accounting for 27 percent of the country's meat consumption. The industry, one of Pakistan's largest, is worth 200 billion rupees (US\$ 3.2 billion).